Making the Most of Your Mentor: A Guide For Mentees

Surviving and Thriving in the Research Years
Seattle, WA
August 13, 2018

Ellen Schur, MD, MS
Division of General Internal Medicine, Harborview Section
Department of Medicine
University of Washington
What is mentorship?

Mentoring: Advancement and enjoyment of career

Dynamic
Collaborative
Professional Development
Two Way Street
Personal Development
A Mentor is different than a...

- **Manager**
  - Directs work
  - Focus on performance
  - Motivated by organizational needs

- **Role Model**
  - A distant relationship
  - Passive role

- **Sponsor**
  - Champions
  - Focus on career development
  - Motivated by advancement goals
Why do I need a mentor?

- Increase productivity
- Improve career advancement
- Increase achievement of grant funding
What does a mentee do?

**Mentor**
- Advanced rank/experience who guides, teaches, develops novice
- Skill development
- Academic guidance
- Research
- Personal development

**Mentee**
- Active role: plan and set agenda
- Follow through
- Ask questions
- Ask for feedback
- Listen
- Managing up
How can I be good at it?

**Mentor**
- Available and accessible
- Coach & role model
- Recognize potential
- Provide opportunities
- Inspire to take risks
- Improve
  - Sense of identity
  - Competence
  - Effectiveness

**Mentee**
- Well organized and takes initiative
- Creativity and motivation
- Open to new ideas
- Seeks feedback
- Respectful and considerate
- Know resources
  - especially other people
Stages of Mentoring

Kathy Kram

Initiation
Initially hierarchical

Cultivation
Interactive sharing

Separation
Plan to independence

Redefinition
Collegial relationship
Stages of Mentoring

Initiation: Positive emotions
Cultivation: Relationship reality
Separation: Negative emotions & stress
Redefinition: Gratitude
Initiation: First Steps

Clarify **Values**
- What do you value?
- Interpersonal preferences?
  - Personality
  - Gender
  - Race
- Mentor style?
  - Hands on vs. gentle guidance

Clarify **Needs**
- Knowledge gap
- Skills gap
- Confidence level
- Opportunities
- What do you want mentor for?
  - Professional
  - Personal
  - Research
  - Academic
  - Skill development

Set A **Clear Vision**
- Write down goals
  - Three months
  - One year
  - Three years
- Be specific
- Even if you don’t know – try!
Securing A Mentor...or two!

Where to Look
- Target those you know & respect
- Look w/in your department & outside
- Conduct informational interviews
- Ask for recommendations

Common Difficulties
- Perceived unavailability
- Fear of rejection
- Career indecision
- Trying to find “all-in-one” mentor

What to Do
- Be persistent and don’t give up
- If uncertain, seek someone to guide
- Find more than one
- Find junior and senior mentors
Tips for the First Meeting

- Market yourself: you are recruiting mentor
  - Don’t have to ask formally at a 1st meeting
- Communicate clear goals & needs
  - Being prepared demonstrates organization
- Give positive feedback
- Bring a specific and limited request for help to engage the prospective mentor (e.g., research idea)
  - Ask permission to request more help later
  - State exactly what the help might be
- Be accountable: follow up & stay engaged
  - Make mentor feel appreciated
Cultivation: Agreement on Structure and Objectives

- Frequency of meetings
- Key responsibilities & needs
- Confidentiality
- Mutual expectations & goals
- Measures of success & progress

Make Relationship A High Priority
Cultivation: Managing Up

- Understand yourself and your mentor—Goal is to develop a healthy working relationship compatible with each person’s work style and expectations.
- The mentee takes ownership of the relationship:
  - Let your mentor know what you need
  - Set own goal schedule and stick to it
  - Be responsive to suggestions
  - Make yourself available, be flexible
  - Straightforward, bring up issues
  - Directly ask how success judged